

Rosary of Views By His Holiness XIV the Dalai Lama



**Commentary on the Rosary of Views
By His Holiness XIV the Dalai Lama
Translated by Thubten Jinpa
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Day One

I will not be giving the transmission or empowerment for this teaching since in preparation for the Kalachakra in Toronto I had to do a great deal of chanting which was difficult for my lungs. Since you will not receive the empowerment ceremony and the blessing in that form, please do not feel that this is a great loss for you. In fact, it is more important to contemplate, reflect and meditate. Even if one may receive tens, hundreds or thousands of empowerment ceremonies, they will not be of much effect or benefit. So we will be spending two days on teaching the explanation of this text, giving an explanation of the Dharma which in a way is more important than receiving an empowerment blessing.

Of course in very exceptional cases, on the part of the disciple in that all of the karmic conditions have fully ripened and on the part of the teacher, they have a great affinity for the disciple with all of the prerequisites being in place. Under such a circumstance, it is possible/conceivable that by just receiving a simple blessing or an empowerment ceremony, a complete realization can take place in the disciple. But generally speaking, it is only through understanding and hardship that realizations grow.

For example if one looks at the life story of the great Milarepa, one reads that he had once come across a teacher who claimed to have a very special instruction which if practiced during the day, would give enlightenment during the day or if practiced at night, would give rise to enlightenment at night. He claimed that it was such a unique transmission that one could in fact attain enlightenment without any meditative practice. He also heard that this practice was especially appropriate for a practitioner who was at a very high state of karmic maturity. Milarepa met this teacher and felt that he must qualify for this practice. He was very pleased and went to bed not practicing as he thought that he

must be one of those practitioners who will attain enlightenment without any meditative practice. So the next morning the teacher asked him what sort of indications did he receive in his dreams. Milarepa replied that he did not have any positive dreams. The teacher replied in that case that Milarepa was not an appropriate disciple for that instruction. He told Milarepa to seek teachings from the great disciple of the Indian master Naropa, Marpa the Translator. Milarepa went to Marpa and of course we all know how much hardship Milarepa endured from Marpa. Milarepa's story testifies to the fact that it is through hardship and constant practice that eventually leads to realization, not through a simple blessing or being touched on the head by another's palm.

Note: All the quoted verses were added by the editor and were not part of the original.

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The spelling of teachers' names and dates are from Dudjom Rinpoche's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*.

(His Holiness in English) As you know, I am one simple Buddhist monk; I am a human being. So basically we are all the same nature. Everyone wants to have a happy life, a successful life. I also have this desire and I think everyone else also has this desire. Certainly we all have the right to have a happy and successful life. Also I believe that each of us as a human being on this planet has a responsibility to think about humanity, about the world as a whole because our future depends on this. The world or humanity will be happier, more prosperous and have fewer troubles. Each individual part of this humanity will automatically get benefit if the world has fewer difficulties. Otherwise there will be more difficulties, more fear, more doubt and more confusion and all the individuals will suffer. This is the reality. Therefore taking care of the planet and humanity is not something holy but realistic.

So I think that a person who has some experience about the inner world or has had inner sorts of experiences, I feel that person has motivation and inner values or qualities and this is something very crucial for a successful life and the betterment of humanity.

Therefore my number one commitment is promote human values. I think I may touch on something about this according to this text.

My second commitment is to promote religious harmony. Because I am a Buddhist, I am one of its believers. In today's world there are various religious traditions which I feel still have an important role for serving and helping humanity. Yet because of these different religious traditions there is sometimes the motivation for more conflict so the effort to promote a closer understanding among the different traditions is I think important and useful. So that is my second commitment. At this point also, I will explain more according to this text.

My third commitment concerns Tibet. I will not cover this in this program, only the first two, to promote human values and to promote religious harmony. With this will be an explanation of the Buddhadharma and its way of practice. Although I feel that I am a poor teacher. Perhaps as a student there is an exception but generally speaking, perhaps I am also a poor student! (Laughs) So the poor teacher, who is also a poor student, benefits no one (Laughs). Now I will speak in Tibetan.

Among the members of the audience here, many of you may already be familiar with my lectures and teachings from before. However quite a number of you may also be listening to me for the first time. So for those of you in the audience who are listening to me for the first time, can you raise your hands? In that case I will share some of my basic thoughts and opinions with you today and for those of you who have heard me teach before and are familiar with these ideas, please do not feel that I am repeating myself.

In a way, just as the Indian master Santideva stated at the beginning of his text, "There is nothing new that I am presenting here." The point is that from the point of view of spiritual practice, repetition in fact is necessary. It is not sufficient simply to hear something once but rather that understanding needs to be repeatedly cultivated through familiarization. This is essential for spiritual practice.

Secondly, as it is stated in the sayings of the great Kadampa masters, "Although there is not anything that I have not heard before, there is always something new that I have not understood before that I understand now." Because of this, even if I repeat myself perhaps there is no error in this, no disadvantages.

This being the first day and the first session, at the start we will perform some chants, particularly of the Heart Sutra. Tomorrow morning since there are some members of the Chinese Sangha, Buddhist community, it would be wonderful if we were to recite the Heart Sutra in Chinese.

The subject matter of the Heart Sutra is of course the teaching of emptiness. The Heart Sutra belongs to the category of Buddhist scriptures known as the Perfection of Wisdom and it is one of the shortest scriptures in that collection. It is in fact sometimes referred to as the Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-five Stanzas. The main subject matter is a presentation of the ultimate nature of reality, of all phenomena, including the aggregates, the constituents and so on. It also includes the stages of the path. All of these are presented as being devoid of any intrinsic existence. So this is the explicit subject matter of the Heart Sutra, which is the teaching of emptiness and the implicit subject matter is the stages of the path. The emptiness that is presented in the Heart Sutra is the understanding of emptiness in terms of dependent origination. The essence of the stages of the path is of course the cultivation of bodhicitta, the awakening mind by means of cultivating the thought that cherishes the wellbeing of others as being more important than one's own welfare.

When we recite the Heart Sutra, those who are familiar with it should reflect upon its meaning and for those who are not familiar with it but are practicing Buddhists, they should utilize this occasion to contemplate on the enlightened qualities of the body, speech and mind of the Buddha, the Fully Enlightened One. Among the members of the audience who are not practicing Buddhists, those who follow other faiths as well as those who are non-believers, please take this opportunity to have a rest as we recite.

We will now recite the verses of salutation from Nagarjuna's Stanzas on the Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way and also the Maitreya Abhisamayalamkara, the Ornament of Clear Realization.

I prostrate to the Perfect Buddha,
The best of teachers, who taught that
Whatever is dependently arisen is
Unceasing, unborn,
Unannihilated, not permanent,
Not coming, not going,
Without distinction, without identity,
And free from conceptual construction.

And

I bow down to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

She is the one who – through the all-knowledge – guides the Hearers who search for peace to utter peace.

She is the one who – through the knowledge of the path – enables those who promote the benefit of beings to accomplish the welfare of the world.

Since they are perfectly endowed with Her, the Sages proclaim this variety endowed with all aspects.

I bow to her – the Mother of the Buddhas as well as the assemblies of hearers and bodhisattvas.

This finishes the preliminary prayers. We will not perform a mandala offering or so forth. Next we will take refuge in the Three Jewels and generate the awakening mind of bodhicitta which will be done on the basis of the recitation of a single stanza. The first two lines of this stanza refer to going for refuge in the Three Jewels and the last two lines pertain to generating and reaffirming bodhicitta or the awakening mind. So in this context, since going for refuge is performed in conjunction with generating bodhicitta, the awakening mind then the form of refuge that we are taking in this particular context is of the unique Mahayana, the Great Vehicle approach. Partly because when one goes for refuge by reciting these lines, one states that "I shall go for refuge until the attainment of full enlightenment." So one is specifying a time frame; one is expressing the wish to go for refuge in the Three Jewels until one attains full enlightenment. This is what makes it quite unique, a Mahayana form of taking refuge. This is followed by two lines where one says, "Through the power of the accumulations created by engaging in practices such as

giving and so on, may I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all beings.” So these last two lines relate to the generation of the awakening mind.

In both instances there is reference to the person “I”, I shall go for refuge, May I ... When reflecting upon these lines, especially when reflecting upon the term ‘I’, it is important here to be aware of the emptiness of one’s own existence as presented in the Heart Sutra which we recited earlier. One should examine one’s own normal sense of selfhood where one tends to believe that there truly is something called “I” which is enduring within oneself; the experiencer of all of one’s subjective experiences. This seems to be the core of one’s being. One has the belief in some sort of enduring, eternal reality within oneself but as pointed out in the Heart Sutra, this is a false conception. The “I” that one perceives does not exist in the manner in which one perceives it. The “I” or one’s own existence is devoid of intrinsic existence, intrinsic reality. So reflect upon the emptiness of this “I”, then go for refuge in the Three Jewels and finally generate the altruistic awakening mind for the benefit of all beings. In this way, if one reflects upon the meaning of these lines, this constitutes the practice of the accumulation of both merit and wisdom. This is why in the last line that through the power of the accumulations created by engaging in practices such as generosity and so on, one says, “May I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all beings.” So the accumulations here refer to both the accumulation of merit and of wisdom and in this way one’s practice of going for refuge and the generation of the awakening mind will be complete.

The text which is being used as the basis for my lecture series is *The Garland of Views* which was originally given as a series of instructions to the Tibetan monarch Songsten Gampo and his circle of attendants, royal family members and so on. Padmasambhava, the great Indian master who came to Tibet, gave a series of instructions to the king along with his circle. Before he left Tibet he placed these various instructions together in the form of a note. This is why in the title of the text there is an explicit reference to it as being a note that summarizes the different views. So this reference to the term note or *kyer ja* in Tibetan, indicates this and that this text was specifically composed by Ratnasambhava as a summary of the various instructions that he gave to King Trisong Detsen and his attendants.